

# Syria

## I. Mixed Races of Mountain & Plain

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**S**YRIA, a land of rich diversity, lies along the east shore of the Mediterranean from the Taurus range in the north, to the desert in the south, bounded on the east by the Euphrates and the wilderness. Arabia Petraea, Palestine, and Lebanon, falling within these limits, are treated in separate articles. Here we deal mainly with the country to the north and east.

The land falls into five clearly-marked divisions of plain and mountain, running roughly parallel to the shore. The streams descending from the mountains to the sea and the desert are rapid and short. True rivers are found only in the central valley. Two rise close together near Baalbek. One, the Orontes—Nahr el 'Asi—flows northward and round the base of Jebel Ansariya past Antioch to the sea. The other, the Leontes—Nahr el Litany—flows southward, then turns abruptly, breaks a passage through the mountain, and issues on the shore north of Tyre. Streams rising at Hasbeya, Dan, and Caesarea Philippi, join to form the Jordan. These rivers are not navigable, but their course fixed the direction of the great highway between the empires of the East and that of Egypt.

### Mute Wonders of the Past

The flowers of spring are glorious everywhere. The plains yield rich crops of cereals; there are gardens and orchards, walnut and mulberry trees. On the uplands we have pine and carob, olive, vine, fig, and dwarf oak, cypress and cedar. Higher still are alpine plants. On the spacious pasturelands are herds of cattle, sheep, and goats.

A striking feature of Syria is the multitudes of ancient ruins, the pathetic remains of once splendid cities, the relics

of temple and fortress, church and monastery, tomb and monument. On yonder mountain, remote and lonely, lie a few columns and carved stones, mournful witnesses of vanished glories. From this grey crag a crumbling castle frowns over the land which once it held in awe. On many a hill, in many a vale, in bosky shades where, deep in the mountain's heart, the sweet spring waters rise, you will see the broken arch, the prostrate pillar, the carven capital, the delicately-sculptured frieze, the tumbled wreck and confusion of shrine and citadel. Anon we find streets of houses built of massive stones that need only roofs to be habitable again. A date or name may be found on a "written stone," but inscriptions are often illegible, and the secrets of the past are locked in age-long silence.

### Improved Means of Communication

The Great War hastened the development of railways, and most of the main centres of population are in touch with Egypt, Arabia as far as Medina, Mesopotamia, and the shores of the Bosphorus. The chief cities stand in two almost parallel lines, the first along the edge of the maritime plain, like pearls upon a string of emerald; the second studs the centre of the great inland plain.

Alexandretta, the principal seaport of North Syria, surrounded by green hills, is a fever-haunted place. Antioch, some fifteen miles inland from the ruined Seleucia, is poor and shrunk compared with the once splendid city on the Orontes. Latakia, a squalid town in a picturesque position, fronting the island of Cyprus, boasts of a triumphal arch of the time of Septimius Severus. Tripoli stands astride the

## SYRIA & ITS PEOPLES



### PICTURESQUE DRESS OF SYRIAN ARABS

No people exists which is more proud of its nationality and intolerant of foreigners than the Arabs. Europeans are regarded as heaven-sent sources of wealth, but the rest as mere unbelievers

holy river Kadisha, a little way from the shore, on the hill slope under the grim castle of Tancred. The most prosperous city of Syria is Beirut, on the south shore of beautiful St. George's Bay. The mountain behind it rises grandly through terraced slope, fair field, and lofty woodland, away to the snowy summit of Jebel Sannin.

For Aleppo the natives claim a fabulous antiquity. It stands in a wide plain near the desert, traversed by the river Kuweik, which ends in a morass to the south. The citadel, partly in ruins, crowns a gigantic artificial mound in the centre of the city, supported, says Arabian tradition, by 8,000 pillars. In the beautiful gardens at Hama,

adorned with graceful silver poplars, are seen to perfection the great wheels lifting water from the Orontes for irrigation.

Homs, the old Emesa, birthplace of Heliogabalus and of Julia Domna, wife of Septimius Severus, is dominated from the south by the castle mound, which may be of Hittite origin. Away southward, in the middle of the valley, stands the remarkable monument, of unknown origin, Kamu'a el Hermil, a lofty tower capped by a pyramid, and decorated with pilasters and hunting scenes sculptured in low relief. Its purpose is quite unknown.

Incomparable in grandeur are the ruins of Baalbek, on the edge of the spacious plain in full view of the snow-capped heights of Lebanon. Resting on massive substructures of high antiquity, and guarded by walls in which are seen the mightiest stones ever cut

and placed by the hand of man, the majestic remains of temples, church, and fortress fill the beholder with awe and admiration.

Damascus, first and fairest of Syrian cities, holds a place of its own. The Barada, ancient Abana, flows down from Anti Lebanon through a wild gorge, doubles its volume with the stream gushing from 'Ain Fije, and throws itself, fan-like, over the plain, redeeming it from the desert, and creating a veritable earthly paradise. Here stands the city, surrounded by gardens and orchards where, in myriad channels, tinkle the sweet waters of the Abana. Despite the invasion of things Western—e.g., in electric light



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and tramway cars, Damascus still charmingly preserves its ancient Oriental character.

The Syrians are Semites. A slight admixture of alien blood in ancient and modern times has hardly affected the stock. But within the unity of race there are to be noted many well-marked distinctions, in history and traditions, in social customs, and more particularly in religion.

Among the villagers, alike in mountain and plain, life is reduced to very simple terms. Impecunious, and improvident as sparrows, they yet suffer no real

penury. Winter in the uplands can be rigorous, but Syria as a whole is a sunny land, where necessary food, clothing, and shelter are comparatively inexpensive. As in other parts of the world, things are dearer now, but I once knew a man who maintained his wife and family adequately on sixteen shillings a month.

Flesh food is seldom seen, save at festivals, or in honour of a guest. Bread and olives are the staple food, with eggs and vegetables. Olive oil and melted butter are largely used in such cooking as is done. A universal



**BEDUIN OF THE SYRIAN DESERT ARMED AGAINST ADVENTURE**

Mounted on his fleet Arab and well equipped with rifle and ammunition the nomad Beduin of the vast Syrian sands is supreme in this his native element. Swooping suddenly down upon caravan or village, bands of these wild nomads are away again before, in the shock of surprise, reprisals are even thought of. Yet they can be courteous, too, as many a desert traveller has found

*Photo, C. Chichester*





#### IN ONE OF THE NARROW COBBLED LANES OF ANCIENT ANTIOCH

In the lovely and fertile plain of the lower Orontes, on whose left bank it stands, Antioch scarcely suggests its ancient greatness, nor does it occupy more than a tenth of its one time wide area. The streets, each furnished with a pavement and deep gutter, are narrow, and the tiled houses having few windows save on the inside present dull expanses of blank wall

*Photo, American Colony in Jerusalem*

dish is the deliciously refreshing "leben," slightly acid, curdled milk. With boiled rice it forms an excellent meal. In season much wholesome fruit is eaten.

Men usually wear wide, baggy trousers and long shirt of white calico, the latter confined at the waist by a leather strap. Over this is worn a garment like a dressing-gown of coloured cotton, or,

on gala days, of silk striped in bright hues, from the looms of Homs or Damascus, with a belt of elastic cotton webbing. Over all is worn a square-cut cloak of wool and cotton, which serves as a waterproof; or, supported on sticks, as a shade from the heat, and at night as a blanket. The "furweh," a jacket of lambskin dressed with the





**TRAM LINES INFRINGE ON THE LITTLE-CHANGING CUSTOMS OF THE EAST**  
 In Syrian towns it is usual for sellers of a similar "line" of goods to congregate together in one street. Thus among many others in Damascus are the silk bazaar, the bazaar of the joiners, and the cloth bazaar. Basket-work is for sale in these booths, while above, lattice work, daintily contrived, guards the womenfolk against unlawful glances from the street

*Photo, Donald McLeish*

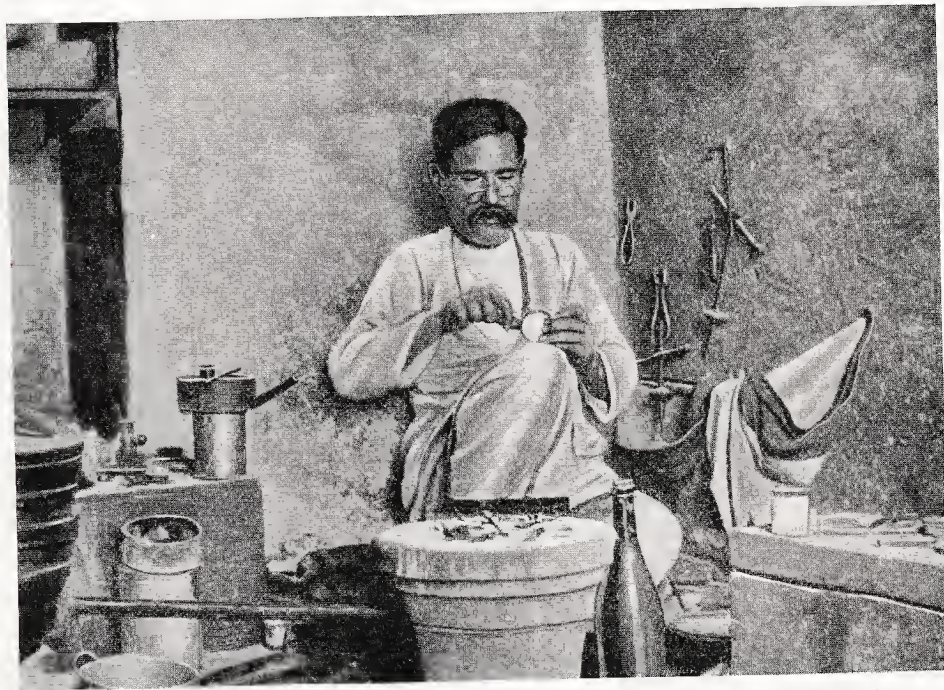


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wool on, is sometimes worn in cold weather. On the head a close-fitting felt cap, red tarbush with tassel, or turban of white or coloured cloth is worn. Often the men go bare-foot; but red leather shoes, and long boots coming half-way up the calf, with tassel in front, and iron-shod heels, are common.

Women's dress resembles that of the men, the coloured upper garment being open to the waist, where it is kept in

animals—sheep, goats, donkeys, mules and hens. Whenever possible they sleep in the open air. The women carry water, gather firewood, wash, bake, cook; and, of course, the children are their special care. The men till the soil, tend vineyard and orchard, and see to irrigation. The women often dig the parts that cannot be reached with the plough. The younger people look after the flocks and herds. The happiest times are those of harvest, the gathering



SYRIAN GOLDSMITH AND JEWELLER AT WORK IN ALEPPO

Many of the native goldsmiths in Aleppo are extraordinarily clever craftsmen, producing beautiful and intricate work with the crudest implements—a tiny charcoal forge, bellows worked by a handle on the top, and a paraffin lamp and blowpipe for soldering and welding. Much of the gold used to be obtained from English sovereigns, melted down and mixed with a certain amount of copper

*Photo, E. F. Blaze*

place by a girdle. Round the head is wound a piece of dark cloth, leaving the crown uncovered. Women are usually unveiled. On festive occasions they blossom forth in brilliant colours. They are very fond of jewelry, wearing rings, bracelets, and anklets of such metal as they can afford.

In times of storm and winter cold the one-roomed, flat-roofed houses shelter the family, and also their domestic

of the olives, and the vintage, when men, women, and children lighten the long day's toil with frolic and laughter and song.

Marriages are arranged by parents and guardians, and, as a rule, simply acquiesced in by the parties. It is rare to find a girl of over twenty unmarried. The gay attire worn by the guests typifies the unrestrained rejoicing that marks the marriage day. Children,





#### EUROPEAN DRESS AND ORIENTAL SPLENDOUR IN A DAMASCUS HOUSE

Among the wealthy of the city the houses usually follow the same ground plan. Living-rooms ascend in storeys around a central court, and this is where most of the decorative artistry is lavished, and where, upon a divan at one end, visitors are received. The custom prevails of the master of the house advancing so many steps towards the guest according to the warmth of his welcome

*Photo, Canon Parfit*





# ON THE DESERT ROAD FROM DAMASCUS TO PALMYRA : A HALT TO WATER THE HORSES

Where once stood the towers and temples of Palmyra—the Tadmor mentioned in the Old Testament, 2 Chron. viii. 4, as having been built by Solomon—is now a miscellany of huts built of and among the fragments of ancient masonry. The journey from Damascus takes about four days with an equipage of this kind. An armed guard is necessary as the country hereabouts is admirably suited to the practice of brigandage. The enterprising traveller is, however, well rewarded for the discomforts and dangers of his journey by the wonders of antiquity, especially the Temple of the Sun, that make marvellous the journey's end

*Photo, C. Chichester*



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especially boys, are regarded as the most precious of God's gifts. They are often pampered and thoroughly spoilt. At birth they are swaddled in cloths dusted with salt. A Syrian once told me, confidentially, that white people had a curious smell about them. He said it was because we had not been salted as babies.

You must never admire a baby without saying first, "In the name of God," or your praise will bring disaster. A blue bead, or a disk of blue glass with a white centre, strung on the hair or attached to its person, is worn to protect the babe against the evil eye. If the little one is weakly, give it the name of a wild beast; something of the animal's strength and toughness will enter the child and lend it powers of endurance. A sure defence against all pulmonary troubles is a segment from a wolf's backbone worn on a string round the neck.

### Forms of Local Superstition

For the Moslems, lack of a beard is of sinister significance. "Meet goblins in the morning rather than a beardless man," so says the proverb. To meet a woman carrying an empty water jar is most unlucky; for a marriage procession it is a desperate business. Evil consequences, however, may be avoided if the woman smash the jar, or even thrust her hand and arm into it.

Many of the peasantry are shy of the photographer. A man's picture takes something of his essence, and may put him in the power of its possessor. For a like reason they carefully destroy their nail-parings and hair-cuttings. With growing education the blood-feuds that so often darken life in the villages will gradually disappear.

In the cities a few successful merchants and others live in considerable luxury. But the life of the humbler classes resembles that of the peasantry. Many men affect European dress, retaining only the red tarbush. The more

religious, especially among the Moslems, cling to the graceful flowing robes and turban. The ladies of the harem, in their secluded life, are beautifully attired in dresses of rich material. When out of doors they wear neat European foot-gear. The whole person is enveloped in a loose overall—*izár*—of white or black, which comes over the head and is gathered by a girdle at the waist. The Moslem ladies are closely veiled.

### Mingling of Orient and Occident

The bazaars, especially in a cosmopolitan city like Damascus, present a most picturesque appearance; people from everywhere, in garb of their own cut and colouring, mingle together amid the babel of many tongues. Silks from native looms jostle Manchester and Birmingham goods on the stalls. There is much delicate artistic work in the precious metals and jewelry, in ornamental and inlaid woodwork, with the fine rugs and carpets of the Orient. Good trade is done in tobacco, fruit, and other produce of the country, in native soap, wine, raisins, and grape honey.

In north-east Syria many of the Arabs dwell partly in curious beehive-formed houses of clay, and partly in ancestral tents. The men are generally well-favoured and handsome. The women are graceful, and would be even beautiful but for the disfiguring tattooed underlip. They marry young, and in their hard life the bloom of youth soon fades. A woman is already old at thirty.

### Lingering Customs of the Wilderness

A well-to-do sheik may be clad in coloured silk, with a silken kerchief bound to his head by a coil of thick woollen cord, a sword with a silver handle and scabbard at his side, and jewelled-hilted daggers and pistols in his belt. The rest are content with calico shirt and rough hair cloak. The women wear a single ample garment of blue calico, hanging in loose folds over the girdle that gathers it at the waist.





#### PATRIARCH OF THE MARONITE CHURCH AND ONE OF HIS BISHOPS

From the eighth century, when they were converted to Christianity by John Maro, the Maronites, referred to in the chapter on Lebanon, have kept themselves a separate sect, more or less in sympathy with the Roman Church. They retain a special liturgy, and have about nine bishops, the figure on the right holding the see of Baalbek. They live mainly near Damascus

*Photo, C. Chichester*

Round the head is wound the characteristic strip of dark cloth.

The men do something in tilling the soil and tending their sheep and camels, but the women are the great toilers. Among other things they take their produce to the market and carry back their bargains. These people have preserved many customs of the wilderness, notably that of hospitality. But

they are held in contempt by the desert Arabs, who would scorn to guide the plough, or trade in chickens, eggs, and milk. For them the freedom of the wild, and the exhilaration of the robber raid.

Religion is a thing of serious import in Syria. It binds a community together in something closer than blood-brotherhood, and as decisively marks it off



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from all others. Even the different sects of the same faith—Moslem and Christian—dwell apart in their own districts, and in their own quarters in the cities.

The Orthodox Mahomedans—Sunni—are in a majority in all towns except Beirut. The heretical Shiites, followers of 'Ali, known in Syria as Metawileh, live chiefly in the western mountains. Uncleanly in their habits, they are yet great sticklers for ceremonial purity. They pray singly, not in groups like the Orthodox. Their women also pray

in the open air. They hold the doctrine of "taqiyah" (guarding oneself), common to all the secret religions in Syria. Originating in the necessity that long existed of professing orthodoxy to escape persecution, this cautious mental reservation was established as a doctrine by the Shiites. If you remain true in heart to your own faith you may feign any other for the sake of safety or personal advantage.

The Nusairiya, living in the mountains bearing their name, are descendants of the Nazarini of Pliny the elder. They



### LAYING THE DUST OF A PARCHED HIGHWAY THAT LEADS TO DAMASCUS

By the hot, white surface of the road trickles a grass-bordered ditch, and from this the waterer fills his clumsy ladle. Upon the shady side some Turkish effendi walks his horse, and on either hand cool gardens for which Damascus is famous make the way still more torrid for those who, like the old woman with her basket, have to foot it in the dust

*Photo, Donald McLeish*





#### STREET ARABS IN THE EUROPEAN QUARTER OF BEIRUT

Though included within the territory of greater Lebanon, Beirut remains essentially a port of Syria, as it has been since before the Crusades. It lies upon the Mediterranean, and is connected with Damascus by sixty miles of railway. Wool, gums, silk, and oil leave its bustling quaysides, and the annual export trade is valued at £800,000



#### BRIGHT COLOURS AMONG THE SHADED COBBLES OF A BEIRUT ALLEY

Much of that charm which is, for Europeans, usually associated with towns of the Orient, despite the accompanying squalor, is absent from Beirut, and Western influence is observable in many parts. Nevertheless, the old town, with its fine site upon St. George's Bay, and its usually tolerable climate, makes a strong appeal to the visitor coming from the heat-ridden cities elsewhere in Syria



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give divine honours to 'Ali, and practise mysterious rites into which only Nusairi born are initiated. The use of wine is lawful. Women have no reasonable souls, and cannot be entrusted with the secrets of the faith. No soul of man perishes eternally. The good pass swiftly to rank among the stars. But even the worst, purified by much transmigration through beasts and men, enter Paradise at last.

The Ismailiya are seceders from the Shiites. Little is known of their special beliefs. They are sceptical as to God's existence. They think that a man lives only as the receptacle of a partial soul which rejoins the universal soul at death. The Assassins were a section of the Ismailiya. Their name is derived from hashish, an intoxicating extract of hemp with which they were sometimes drugged. They reduced assassination to a fine art, and in Crusading times the Old Man of the Mountain, the chief who controlled them, was a name of dread.

### Secret Faith and Ritual

A few thousand of Ismailiya still exist in the neighbourhood of their old Syrian haunts. They send annual tribute to the modern representative of the Old Man of the Mountain, who lives in Bombay, believing him to be possessed of supernatural powers.

The Jews, who since the Dispersion have probably lived continuously in Syria, are, in everything but religion, practically native Syrians, sharing the same customs, superstitions, and language. Here also we have all branches of Oriental Christianity, living alongside each other in what may be called a state of armed neutrality. Something is said of the principal sects in Syria in the chapter describing Lebanon.

While these distinctions are deep and abiding, it is yet true of the Syrian people, as a whole, that a great common inheritance of pagan superstition mingles in their mysteries, and finds expression in secret faith and ritual practice.

Little is known of what goes on at their ancient sanctuaries or "High Places." But pilgrimages are made, gifts are brought, prayers are offered, and vows registered. And these are vows no man is ever known to break. At times sheep and goats are slain, and their blood smeared on wall, doorpost, and lintel, also on horse and camel to protect them. The victims are cooked and eaten by the worshippers, who rise up to play, footing the solemn dance under the greenwood tree.

### Salvation by Sacrifice

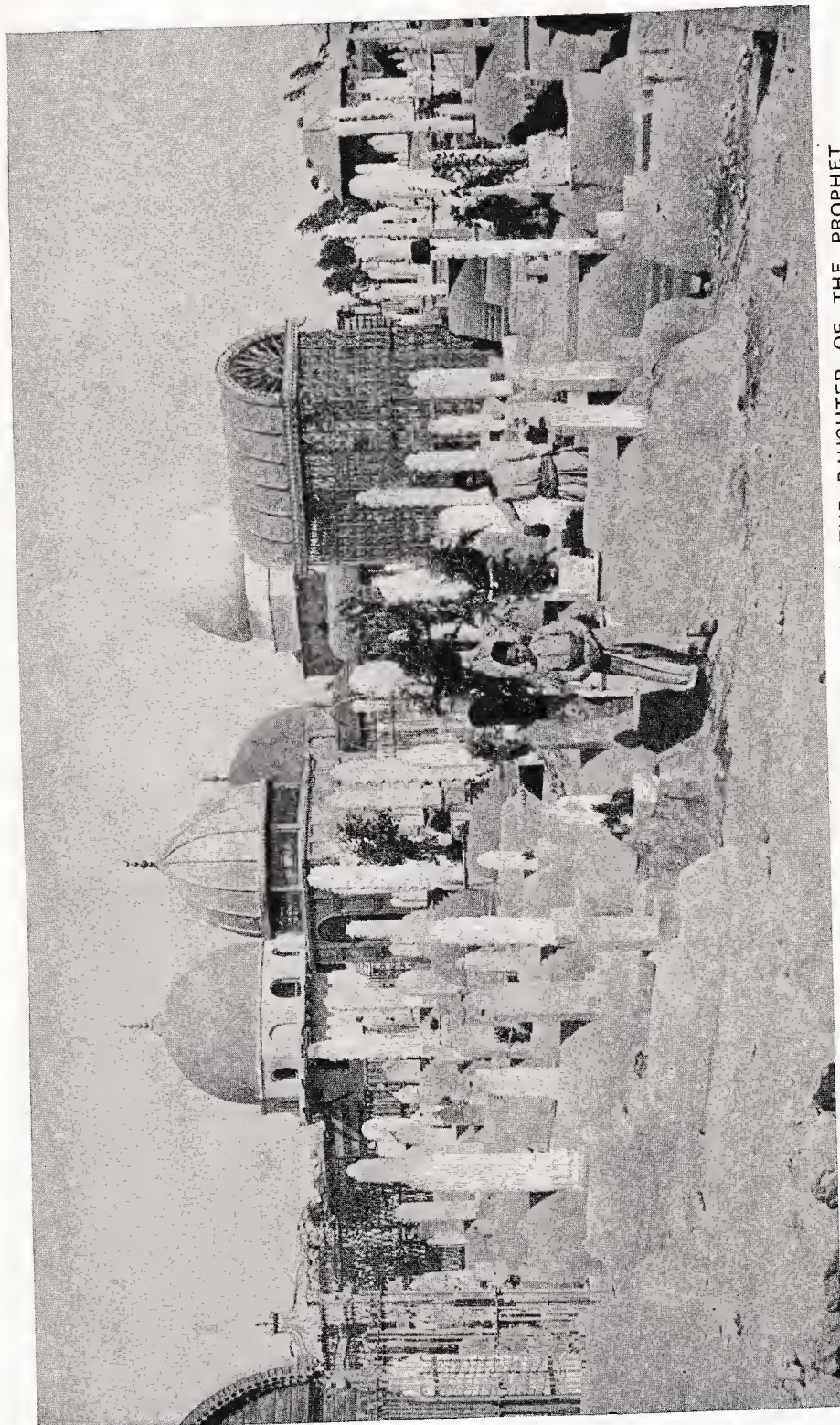
Important enterprises are begun with sacrifice. The blood of a sheep will be poured into the foundation of a new house, or smeared on part of the rising walls, "for the safety of the workmen." A victim is slain for the health of a new-born child, whose forehead is marked with the blood. The new moon is greeted with outstretched hand, which then is kissed and raised to the forehead with mutterings of "Honour to God. Honour to thee."

During an eclipse of the moon an unholy clamour is made with every available instrument of noise to frighten away the monster that is attempting to swallow the orb of night. "Let go our moon," they cry, "or we will be up at you with a club!" When my beautiful Arab mare died, Moslems, Jews, and Christians came expressing the fervent hope that it was my "redemption"—that the mare had redeemed my life with hers.

### Paganism in Syria's Heart

These are but illustrations of hoary superstitions that have proved singularly tenacious of life. Foreign influence is manifest here, introduced no doubt with the large admixture of immigrant blood in the early history of the country. There is still very much to be learned, but we know enough to show that, by whatever name the people choose to be known, an old-world unconquered paganism still holds dominion in the heart.





# MAHOMEDAN BURIAL GROUND OF DAMASCUS WHERE SLEEPS THE DAUGHTER OF THE PROPHET

Under the domes of the three nearest mausoleums are the tombs of two of Mahomet's wives and of his favourite daughter Fatima. From her is descended the line of Fatimate Caliphs of Syria, and she was accounted by her father to be one of the four perfect women in the world. On Thursdays the women of Damascus come to this cemetery to mourn by the graves of their dead. In the photograph are seen an Arab and his boy, who are tending the shrubs left in the pots at the foot of the headstones, which are elaborately carved and engraved with Oriental patterns

*Photo, Donald McLeish.*



# Syria

## I. From Hittite Monarchy to French Mandate

By E. S. Bouchier, M.A., F.R.Hist.S.

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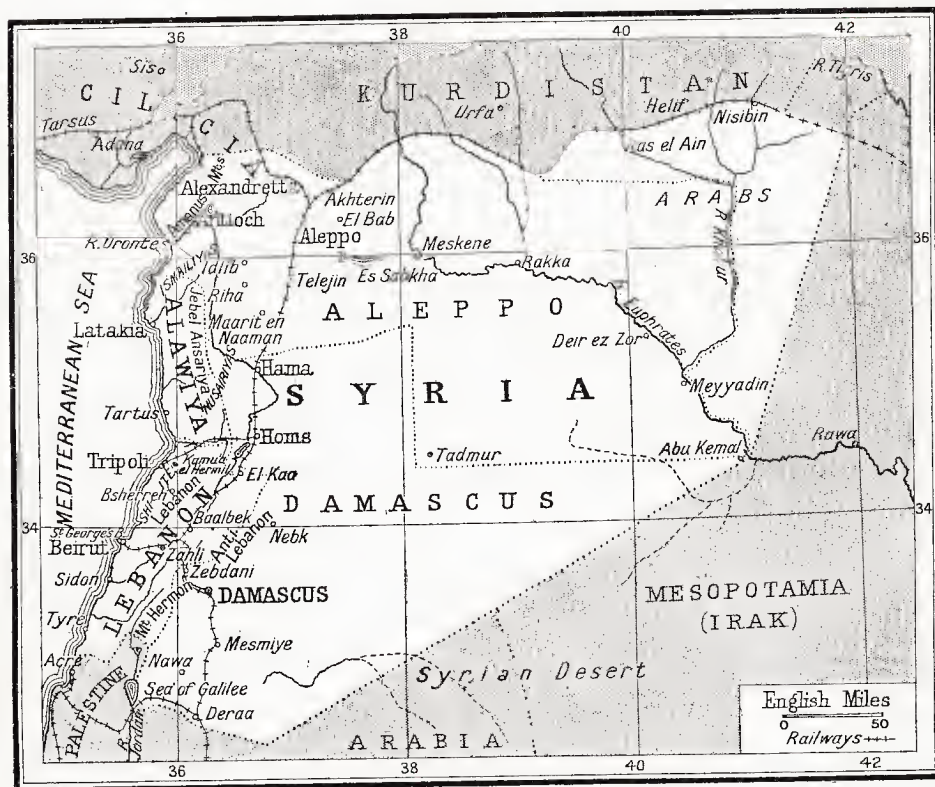
**A** POWERFUL Hittite monarchy, with its centre in the east of Asia Minor, extended over northern Syria, where the inhabitants when history begins had attained some skill in arts and manufactures, due chiefly to early relations with Assyria and Egypt. As the Hittite power declined various petty Semitic states grew up, as those of Damascus, where the Aramaean dynasty was engaged in frequent warfare with the kingdom of Israel, of Hamath, and of Zobah.

In the eighth century B.C. the greater part of Syria became tributary to Assyria, then at the height of its power; and when the empire of Nineveh was overthrown by a Medo-Babylonian alliance it was in turn subject to the Babylonian kings. Towards the end of the sixth century the conquests of Cyrus led to the inclusion of most of Syria in the Persian empire, and his son Cambyses, the

conqueror of Egypt, extended his dominions along the Phoenician coast. Damascus was the seat of government, but considerable local independence was allowed, both to the rich commercial cities of the coast and to various tribal chiefs and priest-kings.

Alexander, after his victory at Issus, overran Syria with little opposition; and during the next thirty years it was ruled by a succession of Macedonian satraps, under whom there took place a considerable immigration of Greek veterans and other colonists. The ultimate success of Alexander's general, Seleucus, enabled him to establish a powerful military monarchy in northern Syria, with its headquarters at the new capital of Antioch on the Orontes, some sixteen miles from its mouth.

Coele-Syria for a time remained to the Ptolemies of Egypt, and only became incorporated in the Seleucid dominions



SYRIA AND ITS TERRITORIES



## SYRIA: HISTORICAL SKETCH

after the victories of Antiochus the Great a century later. The kingdom, however, lacked cohesion. Greek civilization was almost confined to the chief urban centres, and as family divisions and Jewish wars weakened the Seleucid state, Arab and other native peoples overran a large part of Syria. The campaigns of Lucullus and Pompey ultimately led to the formation of the Roman province of Syria (A.D. 64), and a governor with a strong military force was stationed at Antioch.

### Prosperity in the Days of Augustus

For thirty years the Roman civil wars kept Syria in a disturbed state, but the accession of Augustus inaugurated a period of great prosperity. The frontiers were successfully defended against Parthians and Arabs, Roman veteran colonies were planted, as at Berytus (Beirut) and Heliopolis (Baalbek), and an extensive export trade grew up, both in the products of the province and in goods brought by eastern caravans for despatch to Europe from the Syrian ports. This prosperity, though interrupted by the Jewish war of Vespasian's time, continued till the growing weakness of the empire in the third century A.D., and the rise of the Sassanian monarchy in Persia, in place of the effete Arsacids, inaugurated a series of troubles.

In the reign of Valerian a great part of Syria was overrun by Persian troops, and the authority of Rome was only re-established by the energy of the royal house of Palmyra, which, at first professing to act as imperial representatives, for some years secured the practical separation of Syria from the rest of the empire. The campaigns of Aurelian, who overthrew the rebel queen Zenobia, and later of Diocletian, strengthened the hold of the empire on these parts.

### Omniad Caliphs at Damascus

Christianity had developed through the same period, and sectarian conflicts, connected chiefly with the Arian, Nestorian, and Monophysite heresies, play a large part in the history of the fourth and fifth centuries.

From the reign of Justinian the decline was rapid. The persecuting policy of the Byzantine government alienated the native heretical sects, which were quite ready to make common cause with invaders. Thus the great Arab invasions of the period 634-38, under the first generation of Mahomet's successors, met with but feeble resistance. The Omniad Caliphs were able to set up their capital at Damascus, which again became a rich and splendid city.

With the new Abbasside dynasty, the centre of government was moved away to Bagdad (750). Syria was left to the rule of lieutenants, while the affairs of the Christian communities were in part administered by their own bishops.

Towards the end of the tenth century the Byzantine empire had an unlooked-for revival; and Nicephorus Phocas found himself able to reconquer a large district from the Hamdanides, and establish a Byzantine duke at Antioch (969).

Southern Syria fell into the hands of the new Fatimite dynasty of Egypt, which, taking its origin from heretical Shiite leaders in Barbary, now drew away a great part of Islam from obedience to the Abbasside Caliphate. In the eleventh century the power of the new Seljuk Turkish empire made itself felt in Syria, where Antioch was captured in 1081. The Turkish sultan depended largely on mercenary forces officered by Mamelukes, or slaves of the royal household, raised in central Asia and rewarded by grants of castles, cities, or provinces.

### Nur-ed-din and Saladin

Thus most of Syria came to be divided among a number of military fiefs, whose chiefs levied taxes for their own use, but were bound to supply troops when called upon; and they in turn had vassals similarly bound to supply men in war, and prepared to aid them even against the Seljuk sultan himself. So long as the central government was strong this system was successful; the Mahomedan faith was revived, education encouraged, roads and bridges laid out or repaired.

By the end of the century, however, the Seljuk kingdom had split up into petty principalities of mixed Turkish and Arab origin, and on the arrival of the first Crusaders (1097) the whole Syrian coast was gradually allowed to pass under Frankish control. Four crusading states, with their capitals at Urfa (Edessa), Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem, were set up, and the port towns received Italian mercantile colonies, which greatly stimulated trade with Europe. Yet the Crusaders only held a coast strip some fifty miles wide; and theirs was rather an armed occupation than a systematic conquest.

A Moslem revival was not long in coming, led by Zengy, atabeg, or regent, of Mosul, who protected Aleppo against Frankish exactions, won Damascus from a hostile dynasty, and reconquered Edessa. On his death in 1146 his son Nur-ed-din continued the work, and rose to be virtually sultan of Syria, while by means of his famous lieutenant Saladin he overthrew the rival Fatimite power in Egypt.



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The Ayyubid dynasty which Saladin founded continued to rule till 1260, with Egypt as the centre of the empire and emirs at Aleppo, Homs (Emesa) Hama, and elsewhere. In 1258 came a destructive inroad of Mongols, who ended the Abbasside Caliphate and overran Syria as far as Gaza. Egypt fell under the rule of a series of usurpers from the Mameluke class, and the ablest of these, Beibars, expelled the barbarians, destroyed Antioch (1268), and carried the Egyptian arms into Asia Minor. Before the end of the century the last possessions of the Franks on the Syrian coast had fallen.

The Circassian line of sultans (1382-1517) allowed the internal administration to become corrupt and oppressive, and proved unable to resist the invasion of Timur the Tartar, who occupied Aleppo and Damascus and devastated northern Syria. This soon fell into a state of anarchy under rival emirs, while the coasts were raided by Frankish pirates.

In the year 1516 the Ottoman sultan Selim I. secured to the Turks the possession of all Syria. Damascus remained the Syrian capital, with pashas also at Acre, Aleppo, and Tripoli.

In the nineteenth century the most noteworthy incidents are the occupation of Syria by the rebel governor of Egypt Mehemet Ali (1833-40), and the despatch of a French expedition to restore order in the Lebanon district (1860). As a result of the Great War the country has been divided between a native Arab state and a French protectorate on the coast.

Cilicia, before the Great War part of the

Turkish vilayet of Adana, fell into two distinct halves, the western or Rugged and the eastern or Plain Cilicia, the latter including the trading centre of Tarsus.

The first Roman province, dating from 103 B.C., only included the Plain country, but it was enlarged by Pompey in 64, and the city of Pompeiopolis on the site of Soli was used for settling former pirates. Tarsus was the seat of government.

Various kingly or priestly native dynasties were, however, allowed to subsist till the time of Vespasian (74). Tarsus had a Greek element from very early times, and it received important privileges from Antiochus Epiphanes, and in the early empire was one of the chief seats of learning in the east. Augustus favoured it for its Caesarean sympathies; it became a free state, and the franchise was widely conferred.

Cilicia belonged to the Byzantine empire until the Arab conquests of the seventh century. Nicephorus reconquered it from the Arabs in the tenth century, but in the eleventh the foundation of the Seljuk kingdom of Rûm resulted in the southerly migration of the Christian Armenians, whose settlement eventually grew into the kingdom of Lesser Armenia.

A Latin dynasty was established in 1342, but subsequent internal dissensions led to its conquest by the Egyptian sultans. The western half was occupied by the Ottomans in the fifteenth century, the eastern shortly before the subjection of Syria. Like Syria it was held by Mehemet Ali from 1833-40, and subsequently, as already stated, formed part of the vilayet of Adana.

## SYRIA: FACTS AND FIGURES

### The Country

Held by France under mandatory of Supreme Council of Allied Powers, with the confirmation of League of Nations. Situated in Asia Minor, it is bounded north by Turkey, south by Palestine, east by Mesopotamia, and west by the Mediterranean. Continuations of the Amanus and Taurus ranges run from north to south, and include the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon heights. Large part of country is a plateau sloping to Mediterranean on the west and to the desert on the east. Main rivers are the Euphrates, Orontes, and Khabur. Total area about 60,000 square miles, with an estimated population of about 3,000,000.

### Commerce and Industries

Agriculture and cattle breeding form principal occupation of bulk of population. About 6,000 square miles are normally under crops, the principal being wheat, barley, sesame, lentils, chick peas, and durra, or Indian millet. Tobacco is an important product, Latakia being one of the chief production centres. Sugar-cane, hemp, and cotton are grown, and among fruits are the vine, orange, olive, mulberry, and lemon. Mineral deposits are largely undeveloped, and include iron, lignite, gypsum, marble, and building stone. Main industries are the production of soap, wine, oil, flour, and silk thread. Imports for 1921 were

valued at 600,146,643 francs, while exports for the same year totalled 69,848,500 francs. Monetary unit the Syrian pound of nominal value of 20 French francs.

### Communications

Syria is served by portions of the Hejaz and Bagdad railways, and there are branches to the principal ports. Total railway mileage exceeds 1,000, while roads aggregate about 1,500 miles.

### Religion and Education

Population includes about 1,500,000 of the Sunni sect of Mahomedans and some 113,000 Shiites. There are at Antioch three Uniat Patriarchs and one Orthodox Patriarch. The French have established about 300 schools, with accommodation for some 50,000 pupils, and there are some 120 elementary schools of British missionary societies. A Jesuit university has been formed at Beirut, and other educational activities are engaged in by American Missions and Roman Catholic agencies.

### Chief Towns

Damascus, capital (estimated population 170,000), Aleppo (140,000), Beirut (80,000), Homs (60,000), Hama (35,000), Tripoli (30,000), Antioch (30,000).





#### FELLING A WOODLAND GIANT IN GEEVESTON FOREST, TASMANIA

Tasmania possesses immense forest regions, eucalyptus, acacia, and pines in particular covering extensive areas, and timber now represents an appreciable sum in the State's export figures. All timber on Crown lands comes under the control of the Department of Lands and Surveys, whence licences are issued for felling, cutting, and removing timber, and saw-milling leases are granted

*Photo, Beattie.*